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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000129

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STATE FOR AF/FO, AF/W, AF/RSA, AF/PDPA, DRL, INR/AA
AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE PASS TO AMEMBASSY MALABO

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [SOCI](#) [KPAO](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: POLITICAL FOCUS ON YAR'ADUA AND ANAMBRA ELECTION

CLASSIFIED BY: James P. McAnulty, Political Counselor, U.S. Embassy
Abuja, Political Section; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

SUMMARY

11. (C) The Arewa Consultative Forum has joined calls for President Yar'Adua to hand over power to Vice President Jonathan. Senate leaders publicly denied that they intend to impeach Yar'Adua, but People's Democratic Party (PDP) legislators have privately told us that they view Yar'Adua's situation as grim. Leaders of a planned "Mega" Party will meet in Abuja this week to discuss next steps and assure Northerners that they need not fear a Jonathan presidency. The reported redeployment of troops from the Niger Delta is probably a normal rotation, but we continue to watch for signs of troop movements surrounding Abuja. In Anambra, the PDP has accused the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) of supporting another party's candidate. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) On January 31, the influential Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), a prominent grouping of northern political and civil society leaders, joined calls for President Yar'Adua to hand over power to his deputy. ACF members accused the Federal Executive Council (FEC) of lying to the public when it decreed last week that President Yar'Adua remained fit to govern.

13. (C) Faced with a dearth of hard news, weekend press coverage highlighted denials from the Senate spokesman that the Senate was contemplating Yar'Adua's impeachment. A northern senator and two House members told Political Specialist February 1 that they had no new information about Yar'Adua's condition. The Senator, a member of the President's ruling PDP, said the inability of Executive Branch officials to provide definitive information pushed the upper chamber to pass a resolution last week urging the President to send a letter of medical vacation to the legislature. He added that officials have contradicted themselves so often on Yar'Adua that Nigerians no longer believed them. "No matter how these few officials want to manipulate the situation, the truth will eventually come out." Another PDP senator told PolMil Specialist February 1 that "there was no turning back" by him and the other senators, and their push to ensure respect for the Constitution.

¶4. (C) The two House members, part of a six-person team slated to visit Jeddah to check on the President's health, told Political Specialist February 1 that they had sent their passports to the Saudi Embassy for visas but had no idea if or when they would travel. One charged that the whole saga remained shrouded "in mystery and deliberate misinformation." The second House member described information on Yar'Adua as "poorly managed," which unnecessarily "overheated the polity."

¶5. (C) Regarding press reports of troop movements out of the Niger Delta, the Embassy Defense Attache Office assesses that the movements are likely part of a normal rotation. More significant would be signs of movements out of barracks surrounding Abuja, particularly the Brigade of Guards. (Note: We continue to watch this situation closely. END NOTE.)

¶6. (C) On February 1, former presidential candidate Pat Utomi told Ambassador in Lagos that he and other leaders of a planned "Mega" Party would meet in Abuja February 3 to discuss next steps. According to Utomi, there is sentiment to send a message to the Northern-dominated military assuring it that a President Jonathan would not swap out the military leadership with Southerners as the

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Northerners have allegedly done at the colonel rank and above with Southerners. He could not rule out a military coup down the road if there was further "political erosion," but he did not see that as a near-term prospect.

¶7. (C) Meanwhile, with just five days to go to the Anambra gubernatorial poll, Nigerian political attention is shifting South. Ironically, the Southeast leader of the PDP has accused INEC Chairperson Maurice Iwu of bias in favor of Andy Uba, a former PDP leader running this time as the candidate of the rival Labor Party. (NOTE: The irony stems from Iwu's alleged collusion with the PDP in the 2007 elections, although some allege that Uba influenced then President Obasanjo's selection of Iwu as INEC Chairperson. END NOTE.) According to press reports, over 23,000 Nigerian Police officers have mobilized for the February 6 election, and INEC has drafted 4,000 National Youth Service Corps members to support 14,300 INEC staff in the conduct of the election.
SANDERS